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Seventeenth-century British poetry is often daunting, so full of archaic words like "thee" and "thou" that it seems irrelevant to life today. After all, how is the modern reader supposed to relate to the world of Robert Herrick and Andrew Marvell, populated by playwrights and patrons and Royalists while distinctly lacking most modern basic comforts? When read with an open mind, however, works from the period apply surprisingly well to society today. In fact, the poems of some of the most prominent Cavalier writers, both of the Early and Late divisions of the period, compare unexpectedly well in terms of themes, imagery, and form to works by one of the best-known songwriters of our time, Bruce Springsteen.

"To the Virgins, To Make Much of Time," by Robert Herrick, is a quintessentially Early Cavalier poem. In it, Herrick's speaker advises young men to get married and have sex "[w]hen youth and blood are warmer" (line 10). Such a sentiment is the very essence of the "carpe diem" theme so often echoed in Cavalier poetry. The work also alludes to the way the Cavaliers frequently play on the words "marry" and "merry" in the lines, "Then be not coy, but use your time, / And while ye may go marry" (13-14). This technique is a clever way in which the poets expressed their belief that early marriage (and, subsequently, sex) is the path to happiness. Images in the poem are also consistently Cavalier, such as in the second stanza, when the speaker refers to the sun:

> The glorious lamp of heaven, the sun,
> The higher he's a-getting,
> The sooner will his race be run,
> And nearer he's to setting. (5-8)

Cavaliers frequently make use of sun imagery because it is a tangible way to show the uncontrollable passage of time, the hastening of death, and the end of any opportunity to enjoy physical pleasure. The same idea motivates the frequent usage of flower images, such as "rosebuds" (1) and the lines, "And this same flower that smiles to-day / To-morrow will be dying" (3-4). Flower and garden imagery is traditionally rather Petrarchan, but its use here makes a mockery of its function in Petrarch's poetry and that of his followers. The use of "rosebuds" refers to female genitalia, an intimate allusion far removed from Petrarch's saintly descriptions of Laura (1). The second flower image in "Virgins" is included to remind the reader of mortality and enforce the theme of "carpe diem," an idea that never cropped up in Petrarch's own usage of flowers, so focused was he on his love for Laura that he felt was eternal. In addition to the themes and imagery, the simplistic form of Herrick's work signifies it as being Petrarchan. Each stanza has a very simple "ABAB" rhyme scheme, and the work is mainly written in the meter of iambic tetrameter, which gives it a very singsong sound.

Richard Lovelace's "To Amarantha, That She Would Dishevel Her Hair" is another fantastic example of an Early Cavalier poem. Once again, the work has a distinct "carpe

diem" theme, as the speaker is encouraging Amarantha to let down not only her hair, but also her inhibitions. He is trying to convince her that they should have sex now, for "[j]oys so ripe, so little keep" (28). This sobering warning serves to remind the reader why "seizing the day" was so popular with the Cavaliers: it could be their last opportunity to do so. In the dangerous time of the English Civil Wars, the frequently Royalist Cavalier poets were loyal to King Charles I, a political stance for which they could have died. The very proximal reality of their mortality led to a strong desire for immediate physical satisfaction, which is evident in the imagery Lovelace uses in this poem. The beginning of the piece is rather tame, simply imploring Amarantha to, "Braid no more that shining hair" (2). Certain word choices, however, such as "ravisher" and "wanton" suggest the typical Cavalier themes of sexuality and pleasure (6, 8). In the sixth stanza, the poem becomes overtly sexual, as Lovelace writes, "Here we'll strip and cool our fire, / In cream below, in milk-baths higher" (21-22). Not only is Lovelace referring to Amarantha and her seducer being naked, but also speaking rather cheekily of their intimate areas. Such sexuality is in direct contrast to Petrarchan conventions, but other images, such as the focus on Amarantha's hair and, particularly, its golden color, evoke the poetry of Petrarch. The sexuality implied by the unbraiding of Amarantha's angelically golden hair, however, suggests that Petrarch's adoration of Laura's seemingly virginal qualities is inferior to the intimacy of which Lovelace writes. Lovelace also writes:

Do not then wind up that light
In ribbands, and o'ercloud in night,
Like the sun in 's early ray;
But shake your head and scatter day! (13-16)

Like Herrick, Lovelace also uses sun imagery in a negative way. Lovelace's speaker tells Amarantha not to do up her hair as she would for daytime, but instead to let it down for night. The form of the poem is also similar to "To the Virgins, To Make Much of Time," again using primarily iambic tetrameter and an "ABAB" rhyme scheme in each of the quatrains, each technique to the same singsong effect.

Bruce Springsteen's "Blinded by the Light" (1973) compares well to these two Early Cavalier works. The song is an extended metaphor in which "the light" correlates to the desire for physical pleasures, namely sex. As such, the various characters mentioned are motivated by sexual needs, such as in the lines, "And now young Scott with slingshot finally found a tender spot and throws his lover in the sand / And some bloodshot forget-me-not whispers daddy's within earshot save the buckshot turn up the band" (7-8). Young Scott and the forget-me-not are each engaged in sexual acts, and Springsteen goes on to write that they are "blinded by the light" (9). This flippantly sexual theme is clearly analogous to Cavalier poetry, and the song also has a "carpe diem" theme, which is best illustrated in the last two lines of the song: "Mama always told me not to look into the sights of the sun / Oh but mama that's where the fun is" (39-40). Although the speaker has seemingly been warned about the dangers of living a "free love" sort of lifestyle, he chooses to live that way regardless, believing it better to "seize the day" and do what feels good at the time, which is similar to the beliefs of the

protagonists of Herrick and Lovelace.

In terms of imagery, these same two lines employ a sun image, as seen in the two Cavalier pieces. There is a large discrepancy in the use of this image, however. Springsteen's speaker seems unconcerned with the passage of time that the sun signified in the Cavalier poems; the sun represents sexuality in this piece, both the beauty and the danger of it. This difference also applies to the "carpe diem" theme, as Springsteen's protagonist simply wants to "seize the day" for the sake of immediate gratification and is not really concerned with taking advantage of physical pleasures now before it is too late. He could just be experiencing the feeling of invincibility that often accompanies youth, never contemplating death, old age, or anything other than the current state of affairs. Alternatively, this difference could arise from the different historical conditions of the times. America during the 1970s was, in many ways, less dangerous than the period of the English Civil Wars. Additionally, the Cavalier poets were at risk because of their political beliefs, so mortality was an important issue to them. At this stage in his career, Springsteen had not yet strongly exhibited the tendencies toward political activism that he showed later with songs like, "41 Shots," about the Amadou Diallo case, let alone did he exhibit any ideas that would put him in grave danger. Whatever the reason, this song departs from Cavalier conventions in this way, but its form is easily comparable to "To the Virgins, To Make Much of Time" and "To Amarantha, That She Would Let Down Her Hair." "Blinded by the Light" relies heavily on internal rhyme and unusually long lines, giving the song a rather "tongue-twister" feel. Although Early Cavalier poetry often focused on iambic tetrameter and simplistic end rhyme patterns, Springsteen's methods bring his song to the same sort of conclusion: a juvenile-sounding, fun work that rolls off the tongue.

Andrew Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress" employs a variety of Late Cavalier techniques, differentiating itself from Early Cavalier works in important ways. The work is a plea from Marvell's speaker to his love interest for her to sleep with him, expressing the theme of sexuality so frequently present in Cavalier poetry, both Early and Late. This theme is evident when Marvell writes that his protagonist and mistress will "[t]ear our pleasures with rough strife / Thorough the iron gates of life," an overtly sexual piece of imagery (43-44). "Carpe diem" resonates throughout the poem, though in a slightly different tone than that of Lovelace's poem. Marvell's protagonist seems significantly angrier about the limited time in which he may enjoy earthly pleasures, bitterly telling his love that "[w]orms shall try / That long preserv'd virginity" if she does not have sex with him (27-28). This speaker does express the same urgency of the Early Cavaliers, however, saying, "At my back I always hear / Time's winged chariot hurrying near" (21-22). Also similarly to the Early Cavaliers, Marvell uses imagery in a mockingly anti-Petrarchan way. He writes of his protagonist "by the tide/Of Humber" while his lady is a world away, "by the Indian Ganges' side" (7, 5). In this way, they would tragically pine for one another, unable to express their love, just like Petrarch. Marvell's protagonist also talks of the centuries he would devote to the admiration of his love's every body part, including a blazon of her body parts that is also rather Petrarchan, although the inclusion of her breasts is more intimate than Petrarch's innocent descriptions of Laura (13-18). Marvell even writes of "rubies," and precious materials such as jewels are frequently used images in Petrarchan poetry (6). Ultimately, however, Marvell's speaker

concludes that they do not have the time for such a drawn-out courtship, no matter how deserving of such adoration she is. Instead, they must rush to express their love physically while they can. In other words, Petrarch's ideas might sound beautiful and loving, but, in reality, no one has time for that. Once again, this piece uses the sun imagery in the last two lines: "Thus, though we cannot make our sun / Stand still, yet we will make him run" (45-46). Marvell's protagonist means that, although the passage of time and, therefore, death, are inevitable, he and his mistress will so enjoy their time together that the sun would have to "run" in order to cut it tragically short for them. Like the Early Cavalier poetry, this work is composed exclusively of rhymed couplets, but its meter departs from convention quite drastically. It is written in iambic tetrameter, a more classic technique, which makes it sound conversational and less singsong.

Springsteen's "Thunder Road" (1975) is very akin to Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress," as Springsteen's protagonist is also pleading with his love interest. He wants Mary, seemingly an old flame, to leave town with him. "Carpe diem" exhibits itself once again as Springsteen's speaker urges, "We got one last chance to make it real" (32). If they do not get out now, they will be forever stuck in "a town full of losers" (64). Sexuality plays a role as well; the protagonist coyly says, "My car's out back…the door's open but the ride ain't free" (46), insinuating that Mary will have to "repay" him with sexual acts (49). The Cavalier pun of "marry" and "merry" also factors into this song, as the love interest's name is Mary, yet another spelling of the word. Mary is a frequent character in Springsteen's songs, with other examples being "The River" and "Mary's Place." Additionally, Springsteen makes similar use of Petrarchan imagery conventions, writing that Mary can spend her "summer praying in vain / For a savior to rise from these streets" (20-21). Clearly, he does not think it possible that a perfect man will appear and fulfill all of Mary's fairy-tale fantasies, and thus she should join him in reality instead of wishing for such a thing. He also uses the imagery of "roses," and flowers are one of Petrarch's favorite images (19). Biblical references, such as "crosses" (18), "redemption" (24), "wings" (33), "Heaven" (35), "the Promised Land" (37), and, as mentioned, "savior," appear in the lyrics (21). Petrarch compared his Laura to an angel, but Springsteen's speaker is telling his Mary to get her head out of the clouds and realize that reality is as close to Heaven as they are going to get, and they have to make the most of it by running away together. The form of this song is also comparable to "To His Coy Mistress." While not written in iambic pentameter, the meter varies, resulting in a song that still sounds conversational and natural. Although Springsteen uses end rhymes, there is no fixed rhyme scheme in the piece, again contributing to its natural, conversational style.

Ultimately, the works of Springsteen examined compare surprisingly well to the works of both Early and Late Cavalier poets, particularly in terms of themes, imagery, and form. While we may look back upon the 17th century with wonder at its foreignness, basic human nature has remained the same and is reflected in the artistic endeavors of the period's poets. Still today, we fear death, enjoy sex, and try to live life to its fullest. These are all ideas reflected in the poems and songs of today, penned by writers such as Springsteen, who seem so apart from Herrick, Lovelace, and Marvell. The wide array of

similarities between these works, however, attests that the Cavaliers are not so unfamiliar after all.

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